MATANEL FOUNDATION

YEAR-END EVALUATION REPORT

Program: Perach Zahav Matanel – Netu’im Ben HaDorot: Between the Generations

Year: 2019-2020

Evaluation Methods:

Every year we implement questionnaires at the beginning and end of all of our programs, including the Perach Zahav Matanel-Netu’im Ben HaDorot project. At the beginning of the year, each Netu’im group met to set goals for the year, and held verbal evaluation sessions mid year and at the end of the year to evaluate their success, and provide feedback on the program’s progress.

We evaluate our work both during the year and at the end of it, enlisting the help of our steering committee, which meets twice a year. We regularly discuss and reflect upon the influence our programs have on the participants, as well as on the community at large. We check the efficiency and quality of the cooperation between the various partners, and the level of satisfaction of the participants. Each facilitator and regional director involved in the Netu’im program submits written reports every two months. The regional director and the group facilitator met once a month, and discussed supervision and the project’s progress. Once every quarter, the senior KIAH staff evaluates the program. The Perach Zahav Matanel – Netu’im Ben HaDorot project was one of our most successful and meaningful projects held this year.

Overview:

The Perach Zahav Matanel - Netu’im Ben HaDorot: Between the Generations Project recruited 24 students during the months of October-December 2019 in 9 communities in the socio-geographic periphery: Migdal HaEmek, Hatzor, Tzfat, Nahariya, and Tiberias in the North; Netanya and Bat Yam in the Center; Netivot and Dimona in the South. These students met with 24 elderly participants approximately 20-30 times during the year.

As soon as the Corona crisis began in Israel, and especially during the closure, the students from all of our groups immediately volunteered to help. They were in touch with local welfare departments, filling packages of food and medicine, and delivering them to the needy. They called hundreds of elderly to find out how they were doing, reducing their feelings of loneliness and isolation. Over the past four months, students delivered packages to approximately 3,500 homebound elderly throughout the country. The students’ overwhelming response to the crisis in meeting the needs of the elderly and needy in their communities has shown the incredible untapped potential of these young leaders.
**Evaluation Results:**

Based on our questionnaires and in-depth verbal evaluations of student participants, they reported high satisfaction from their volunteering in the Perach Zahav Matanel – Netu’im Ben HaDorot project this past year. The students reported feeling a very strong connection to the elderly people with whom they volunteered, and felt that the experience greatly impacted their lives. In many cases, the students felt that they received more from the elderly than they could possibly have given them in return. The elderly also offered very positive feedback from their time with the students. This bond that was created between students and elderly allowed them to develop a deeper interaction and learn from each other.

This past year was extremely challenging for elderly in Israel. The Corona crisis brought with it social distancing and extreme loneliness and separation from family, which caused feelings of isolation and despair among thousands of elderly throughout the country. Those without family, or who faced growing poverty, were the most hardly hit. Most of our students working with the elderly during this time talked about how their ongoing meetings provided an anchor for the elderly, which gave them a feeling of security and connection, and something to look forward to each week. Even though in many cases it was impossible to meet face-to-face, connecting by telephone continued, as well as meeting their basic needs (groceries, medicine, and emotional support). These inter-generational activities show the deep and far-reaching impact of this project in normal times, which became even more necessary in times of national emergency.

Our students overwhelmingly saw it as their responsibility to help the elderly in their communities. They not only were acutely aware of the challenges facing the elderly, but they saw it as their role to not only assist where they could, but also to bring a human smile and listening ear to assuage the extreme loneliness of the elderly brought on by quarantine restrictions.

In all of our cities, the students continued their connections with the individual elderly they were paired with, but added to that hundreds of other elderly in their communities, not only delivering food and medicine, but also organizing the local community to donate food, bake cakes and challot, and give other holiday food to the elderly, so that they did not feel so alone.

Some of the Netu’im students shared very difficult experiences, and witnessed elderly in very dire circumstances. They would knock on a door and find a solitary elderly woman living in extreme poverty. These experiences motivated them to act – they were in contact with local welfare services, municipalities, and local public figures in their cities to talk to them about the situation and try to see how they could help and map out the needs of the elderly in their cities. What they learned made them more sensitive and connected to the issue, and inspired them to fight harder to help this population.
One of the students in Bat Yam, Oren Michaeli shared:

“Several times during the Corona crisis, we heard about Holocaust survivors that were found dead in their homes, often after a week or more where no one had noticed. Each time I heard this on the news, my heart fell in my chest, and I thought how is it possible that we as a society are not taking care of our Holocaust survivors? On Holocaust Remembrance Day, I felt such emptiness. Usually on Yom HaShoah, we meet with survivors and hear their stories. This year we couldn’t meet physically, and we knew that we had to do something different. We contacted survivors in Bat Yam by phone. We wanted to make sure they were okay. Above and beyond the amazing personal connections that were created between students and survivors, we listened to their troubles and informed the welfare authorities of their needs so they would be taken care of. Our goal was to create friendships for the long term; to continue the connection with the survivors in the future, so that the survivors will never feel alone again.”

Participant Feedback:

“The connection with Albert was very meaningful to me; he became a kind of grandfather to me.” – Itai Cohen, Hatzor

“We were very touched to see this special program turn two strangers into family. We are proud of our young people, who know the meaning of mutual responsibility and how to make it a reality.” – Talia Vakhnin, Netu’im coordinator, Tzfat

“I can see that my volunteer work is very meaningful for Shlomo. His wife told me that Shlomo doesn’t like to go out, but when I come he is happy to walk with me. He spends most of the day in bed. When I come over, he has a reason to get up.” Yossi Peter, Netanya

“I feel blessed that I had the opportunity to participate in this project!” – Eden Peri, Tiberias

“The hours spent volunteering in the Matanel Netu’im project caused me to understand the significance of the connection between the elderly and the young generation – how much good it does them, and how important our meetings are for both of us! Thank you so much for this opportunity to take part in this project!” – Shira Noach, Nahariya

“As part of the Netui’m group, we chose to work with the elderly in our city during the Corona crisis, and this turned out to be an opportunity to get to know this population up close – transforming the values we learned into doing – calling them to find out what they needed, and delivering food packages and medicine. To witness the despair and fear in the eyes of the elderly, and then to see a spark of happiness and gratitude after we brought them food, asked them how they were, and listened to them, was unlike anything I have ever experienced. At the same time, I was exposed to the very difficult situation facing some of the elderly in our city – some of them truly feared for their lives. It is outrageous that there are elderly people in this country, who are hungry for food, thirsty for water, or need heating during the winter months,
or a fan to cool them in the hot summer. We passed all of this information over to the city’s Welfare Department, and there is a lot of work to be done. I know that I want to be a part of improving the lives of the elderly in this city." – Shlomit Zaguri, Dimona

We are proud of the work our students did during this project, and especially during the Corona crisis, making sure that the elderly received the care and respect they deserve, alleviating their fear, hunger, and loneliness, and giving them the opportunity to live their final years with a sense of community, and the love that they deserve.

We wish to deeply thank the Matanel Foundation for their support of this vital program empowering young adult leaders to bring joy, companionship, and meaning to the lives of countless elderly in communities throughout Israel.

Irit Rosh Shitrit

Director, Memizrach Shemesh